

# Calgary Skateboard Amenities Strategy

Completed 2011 - Examining Multi-purpose parks for unstructured play



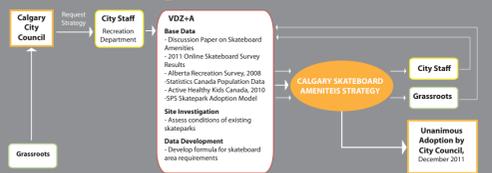
## Introduction

While there is a rise in obesity and sedentary lifestyles among Canada's youth, Calgary City Council has taken a proactive stance acknowledging the importance of outdoor activity, socializing and unstructured sports by directing the development of the Calgary Skateboard Amenities Strategy. This strategy is a first among Canada's top tier cities and it required VZ+A to understand local skateboarders needs, determine Calgary's skateboarder population, develop a method for estimating the terrain area requirements, and allocate the total area through an inclusive, accessible and feasible network. The Strategy has been adopted by Council and serves to focus public and private investments in skateparks that will serve a variety of wheel sports, and as public gathering spaces in neighbourhoods and major quadrant hub parks.

### Why Now?

"Kids are sedentary 59% of the time between 3-6 pm, getting only 15 minutes of moderate to vigorous-intensity activity." AHKC 2010

## Process Diagram



## Grassroots Process

Grassroots advocacy for improved skateboarding conditions and opportunities was led by the Calgary Association of Skateboard Enthusiasts (CASE). This impressive group formed an organization advocating for traditionally under represented youth and they realized political influence through the Council direction for a Skateboard Amenities Strategy.



## Taking Stock of Existing Facilities



Calgary has three skateparks and a mobile skatepark program. The majority of the skatepark terrain is located in Shaw Millennium Park, which is more than 75,000 ft<sup>2</sup>. Upon completion at the turn of the millennium, it was the largest skatepark in North America, had been the focus of skating in Calgary, and hosted major events. Calgary also has two modest modular skateparks named McKenzie and Westside Skateparks in the south and west of the city respectively.

On the ground assessment of Calgary's skatepark inventory revealed a number of issues:

- Mobile parks are inconsistent in their availability and are costly to operate.
- Millennium Park is degrading much faster than parks that use current best management practices. The degradation is limiting its usability.
- The design configuration of Millennium Park makes it less useful than a park of equal size constructed in the last 5 years.
- There are few skateparks in the city and skateboarders must travel long distances to access them.

## Sedentary Youth

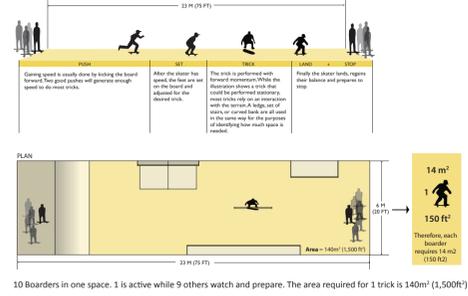
The Active Healthy Kids Canada report gave Canadian children an "F" for their Physical Activity Levels and Active Play and Liesure, a "D" for Active Transportation and a "C" for Organized Sport and Physical Activity Participation. With a rising level of obesity amongst youth and fitness data that demonstrates root causes, it is clear that greater efforts and opportunities are needed to facilitate an active lifestyle. This strategy outlines an opportunity for the creation of exciting outdoor spaces and the promotion of active transportation by linking park destinations along pedestrian corridors.



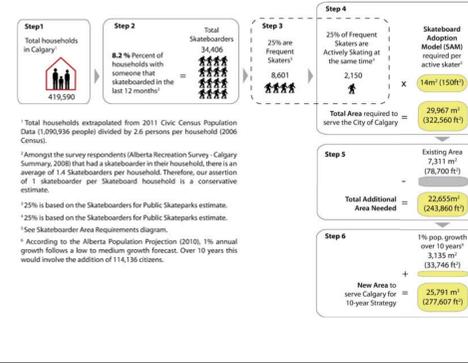
## Understanding the Data

How much skateboarding terrain is needed to serve the youth of Calgary? VZ+A was charged with quantifying the optimal skatepark terrain area and thus developed a formula that takes into account the skateboarding population, frequent skaters, and estimates the number of skateboarders active at the same time. It then applies the SAM model of 14m<sup>2</sup> used by each active skateboarder to arrive at a city-wide requirement.

### Skateboard Adoption Model (SAM)

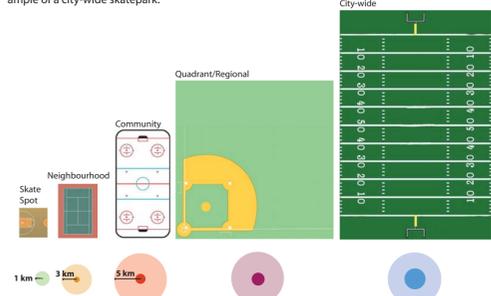


## Quantifying the Need



## Establishing Park Typologies

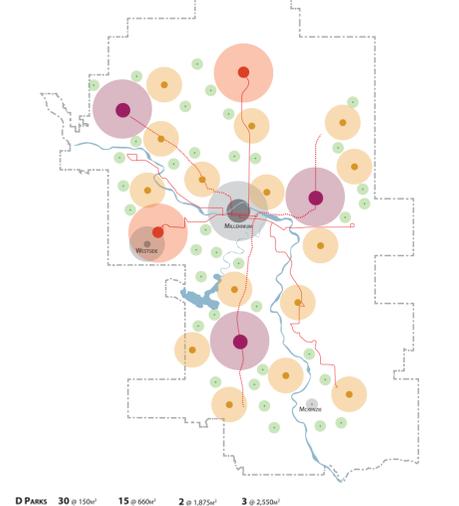
Through VZ+A's experience building skateparks, we have devised five skatepark typologies serving areas as small as a half basketball court, called a Skate Spot and rising in size to meet different scales and functions. The parks progress in size for neighbourhoods and communities. In large metropolitan areas quadrant parks will draw from significant portions of the city, and a city-wide skate park is also a great draw from throughout the city and beyond. Shaw Millennium Skatepark is an example of a city-wide skatepark.



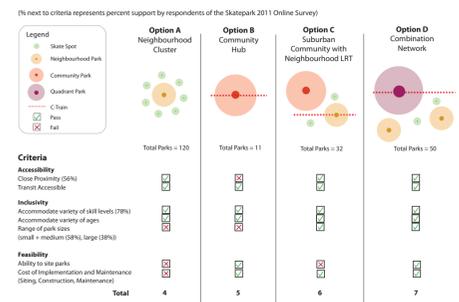
## Accommodating the Need

How should skateparks be distributed? VZ+A devised 4 conceptual network options: Neighbourhood Network Cluster, Community Hubs, Suburban Community with Neighbourhood LRT and the Combination Network. In order to assess the options a fundamental rating strategy was devised. It was determined that a skatepark network should be inclusive, accessible and feasible. These three principles require an awareness to a variety of park users and city offers. Option D - Combination Network was preferred by City staff and CASE as it struck the greatest balance.

### Option D - Combination Network

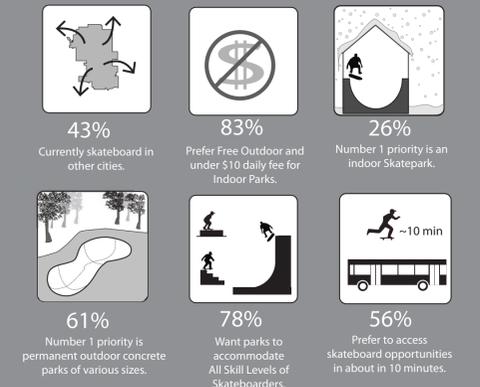


## Rating the Options



## What Skateboarders Said...

During the summer of 2011 an online survey was completed by over 1,000 people. The survey was made available at numerous websites and promoted at skateparks and recreation centres. The diagrams below represent common preferences among participants.



## Implications for Recreation Planning

For Calgary this strategy has provided a vision and general framework for allocating funding for the creation of youth spaces. These skateparks, which will be designed to include bmx, inline skaters and others, will serve as youth centred destinations. Their accessibility will facilitate active transportation, physical activity and outdoor socializing.

Across Canada it is a time of technological immersion and screen time. This strategy is a demonstration to other Canadian cities interested in stimulating youth by reactivating the outdoors. While this is a first large scale 'skatepark' strategy, it is the tip of the iceberg of potential city-wide strategies for getting youth outdoors and active and reversing current health trends.

Unstructured play is the fastest growing area of recreation in North America. This study is an influential first step at attempting to quantify and plan for physical spaces to accommodate unstructured activities and play.

